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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LILONGWE 000034

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STATE FOR AF/S GABRIELLE MALLOREY  
STATE FOR INR/AA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/11/2011

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [MI](#)

SUBJECT: MP WITHDRAWS IMPEACHMENT MOTION AS OPPOSITION  
PARTIES FALL INTO DISARRAY

REF: A. LILONGWE 932

[1](#)B. LILONGWE 1076

Classified By: Political Officer Tyler Sparks for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: The Member of Parliament who began impeachment procedures against President Mutharika is now trying to withdraw his motion. Completing the 180-degree flip, the MP says that his party, the opposition United Democratic Front (UDF), has let him down and it's now clear to him that impeachment is highly unpopular. This comes as the UDF's leader, former President Bakili Muluzi, is trying to face down a mini-rebellion within his party while dealing with personal health issues. The other opposition party is also facing problems, as rumors swirl in the capital city that a number of their MPs are set to jump ship and join the government side. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) UDF MP Maxwell Milanzi sent the Speaker of Parliament a letter on January 6 asking to withdraw the impeachment motion he made in last October's session of Parliament (reftel A). Milanzi stated that the impeachment motion was unpopular with his constituents, civil society and the international community. Milanzi had publicly criticized the UDF for failing to assist him with legal fees in a court case against him. (Note: In response to the impeachment motion, the GOM had brought a case against Milanzi alleging that he was not qualified to stand for Parliament because he is a convicted felon. The charge is based on Milanzi's guilty plea to corruption charges several years ago.) While it's not clear yet if the Speaker will allow him to withdraw the motion, Milanzi now looks to be making a clean break from the UDF.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Meanwhile, former President and UDF leader Bakili Muluzi has left the country and reports are that he will seek medical care in the U.K. His spokesman told a local paper that Muluzi, "has problems with his leg; basically he hasn't been able to stand up for a long time." Muluzi had previously been treated abroad for a throat problem while he was President.

[1](#)4. (C) Muluzi's absence has exposed a number of cracks within the UDF as a party. In a rare show of open defiance, a number of leading UDF politicians are reportedly asking Muluzi to account for money he was allegedly given by Libyan leader Mummar Gaddafi. This, along with the attempt to withdraw the impeachment motion, comes as two UDF MPs announced their defection to the DPP on January 10, and rumors abound in the capital that a number more are set to follow.

15. (C) Malawi's other opposition party, the Malawi Congress Party (MCP,) which has also joined the impeachment drive, seems to be in no better shape. Following up on a scathing letter to MCP President John Tembo (reftel C), a number of MCP MPs are expressing dissatisfaction with party leadership.

A MCP MP told Poloff that over half of the party's MPs are frustrated by, and "fed up" with, Tembo's leadership. While he thinks only two or three will quit the party and join government (and one already has), the MP said it is clear to all MCP members that Tembo is "the problem." This is not to say that Tembo, who has long been the major player in the party, is on his way out. The MP himself admitted it would be nearly impossible to remove Tembo from his position as party President. However, it could open the door to more collaboration by the rank and file with government, on a case by case basis.

16. (C) Comment: With both the UDF and MCP disorganized, President Mutharika and his Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) have never looked stronger. It remains to be seen whether the Speaker will allow Milanzi to withdraw his impeachment motion. However, as long as the opposition remains disorganized, President Mutharika remains relatively safe from impeachment. But while party chaos may embolden some opposition MPs to support Mutharika's legislation, the disorganization of the body politic is most likely to prevent, not facilitate, getting work done, especially when that work involves political risk. Mutharika's modest reform agenda includes complex and politically unpopular measures such as privatization of state enterprises and the passage of an anti-money laundering bill. In tackling these controversial issues the lack of any type of broad government organized coalition is almost certain to mean more delay. While it's still unlikely that the DPP could pick up enough

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MPs to form a majority when Parliament next meets, another 5-10 defections from MCP/UDF is not out of the question. End Comment.

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